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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Eric Raff, Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 360-902-8000

Jeff Weathersby, Media Relations, 360-902-7892

New Informative Website for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in Washington

OLYMPIA- A new Internet website offers a place where deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech-disabled people can obtain a variety of telecommunication relay services designed to empower them to communicate with their hearing counterparts, the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) announced today.

Sprint, a telecommunication relay vendor, developed the website with review by DSHS Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). The address is: www.washingtonrelay.com.

“The new website is comprehensive, with a simple ease of reading format designed to enhance the average resident’s knowledge and understanding of how Washington Relay eliminates telecommunication barriers for deaf, hard of hearing, deaf blind and speech-disabled individuals,” said Eric Raff, ODHH director.

Included in the website are instructions, visual aids and video clips showing how to use the services provided by the Washington Relay Services. There are links that enable direct access to Internet-based services. The site features a frequently asked question section with answers about the services of the Washington Relay Service.

“Dispersing information about the Washington Relay Service will allow us to educate the relay users and the general public about its various services and features,” said Raff.

Services featured on the website include:

- Voice services - connects standard telephone users with deaf, deaf-blind, hard-of-hearing, and/or speech-disabled people who use text telephones.
- Text telephone services – connects text telephone (TTY) users with those who use standard telephones.
- Video relay services – connects deaf or hard of hearing people with hearing callers through the Internet using American Sign Language translated into speech.

- Online relay services – allows users to make telephone calls over the Internet without having to use the traditional TTY equipment.
- Telebraille services – allows deaf/blind users to connect with standard phone users through the use of a special equipped TTY.
- Additional services – Spanish language services, international services, access through public payphones, emergency numbers and answering machine/voicemail retrieval services.

Washington Relay Services are available 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. There are no restrictions on the number or length of calls. The service is confidential and records are not maintained.

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